

Assumption High School Cross Country



Assumption Cross Country began in 1981, and in their very first year the Rockets were Regional Champions. Since that time, Assumption Cross Country has become a very unique and rewarding program. Here are some of the reasons why:

- Assumption has one of the largest Cross Country teams in the state (boys or girls). We've had as many as 150 girls on the overall roster, which can include as many as 30-40 freshmen.
- Academically, we have one of the highest performing teams in the state. Our active roster typically includes National Merit scholars, Governor's scholars, and girls who ultimately attend some of the most prestigious academic universities in the country. Our Varsity team GPA averages 3.7-3.8, and as many as 1/3 of our girls will have cumulative GPAs of 4.0.
- Assumption Cross Country girls are seasoned travelers. Over the years, this team has competed at high level meets in Oregon, New York, Tennessee, Maryland, Alabama, New Jersey, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, Florida, Indiana, Illinois, and California.
- Our Cross Country team participates in a large number of activities, including Wacky Wednesdays, Friday night spaghetti dinners, team picnics, and many other fun events.
- Our competitive goal is to ultimately compete on a national level. We've been a top 4-finishing team at State for 13 consecutive years, won 6 State titles, been ranked both regionally and nationally as a team and were the first girls team from Kentucky to qualify for the Nike Cross Country National Championship in Portland, Oregon – which we did 3 years in a row.

Interested in learning more? This handout was written to help you better understand what the Assumption High School Cross Country team is all about. We believe we have a very special program, one that makes a highly significant and positive impact on the lives of our girls.

What follows is a description of what we do, what we're about, and how we operate. If you're interested in learning more about a specific topic, then the index below provides an outline of the various topics addressed in this handout. There is so much to say and so little space to say it, but we hope what follows will provide you with as clear a picture as possible in terms of anything you might want to ask about Assumption Cross Country.



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Team Philosophy. Although we seek to perform well against in-state teams, our ultimate competitive goal is to perform well on a national level and prepare girls to at least potentially compete in college. While striving toward our competitive goals, we seek to be an inclusive program, a team that allows every girl to chase her aspirations, build her sense of self-worth and do so in a fun, caring environment. We place a heavy emphasis on team unity and work hard to make every girl's Cross Country experience as memorable as possible.

In accordance with our team philosophy, we emphasize 4 key things.

- ***Progression:*** we believe that training intensity should vary with experience and age - that older, more experienced runners should face greater training demands and racing responsibilities than younger runners in terms of distance, frequency, and level of competition. We ask our younger, less experienced runners to consider taking on greater training and racing responsibilities as they pass through our program and also expect our girls to take on increasingly greater leadership roles over time.
- ***Valuing performance:*** we believe that runners can best evaluate their races in terms of what went into the race (e.g. appropriate effort), rather than what came out of the race (e.g. awards or times). Our team does not enter races with the goal being to win championships or run fast times, but rather we emphasize with our athletes the value of learning to always run hard and to be as competitive as possible on any given day. Victories and fast times may occur in the process of running on a high level, and we certainly welcome these things, but victories and fast times are not our primary goal. Only a few girls are capable of winning races or running truly fast times, but every girl on the team is capable of putting a high level of effort into her race and developing the proper mindset which leads to outstanding performances.
- ***Personal Development and Team-building:*** we believe that great teams are like great families. As a result, our team emphasizes a variety of activities designed to bring us closer together and build team unity. For example, each season we have seniors who host one of our team spaghetti dinners the night before one of our big meets. One of our most important activities is the team chapel meeting we hold at the beginning and end of each season. We use the chapel meetings to reflect on our season, draw closer together, and allow our seniors to share their thoughts with the team. These meetings have become a very important tradition on our team. Throughout each season, we also spend time discussing more general "life topics" like developing personal character and maintaining balance in our lives. We also expect every girl on our team to be a role model both within and outside the school.
- ***Running in the future:*** we believe that a program is most successful when our runners seek to continue their running after they leave Assumption. Some of our girls not only run in college, but also excel. E.g., we've had former athletes compete in the Division 1, 2 and 3 NCAA championships. Still others may not run in college, but they continue running, going on to compete in numerous road races, from local 5ks to the New York and Chicago Marathons.

Our ultimate goal as a program is to help our girls develop a positive, active lifestyle that stays with them far into the future.



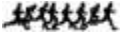
Practice. Cross Country is a no-cut sport where runners of all ability levels are welcome. As such, we aim to make our team accessible to a wide range of athletic abilities and interests. To provide for this kind of flexibility, we ask girls to commit to one of our two training groups – our more competitive training group or our less competitive training group. These groups are discussed below. Official practices begin during the Summer, starting July 15, and then continue into the school year. For most girls, practice lasts between 60 and 90 minutes.


- ***Competitive Training Group (Group A):*** once school begins, the girls in this group commit to practicing at 3:30pm on weekdays (Mon thru Thurs), 9:30am on Sat (unless we have a race) and at 5:00pm on Sun. During the first several weeks of Summer practice, the coaches evaluate each runner and then, based on each girl's motivation and potential, we assign up to 50 girls to Group A. Group A girls are at least eligible to earn a Varsity letter and attend our annual team trip to Chicago. These girls are also eligible for selection on one of the more exclusive competitive trips we take as well. Group A girls who do not earn a Varsity letter by season's end will still receive a JV certificate.

Girls in our Group A have an opportunity to join our Elite Group at the end of the season, which provides additional benefits in exchange for a higher commitment to running. The girls in our Elite Group should lead balanced lives, make a strong commitment to academics and being role models within their personal lives, while committing to train with the team through the Nike Championship series. Our Elite Group girls also participate in several team-related activities as well (e.g. our Team Hike, a Christmas Run video, etc).

- ***General Training Group (Group B):*** girls joining this group practice 4 days a week (Mon-Thurs) at 6:00pm. This group tends to include girls who cannot commit to weekend practices or meets, or who prefer a more low key, JV-like environment. At the end of the season, the girls in this group receive a JV certificate if they have attended regularly. Group B girls are also given an opportunity to participate in our Elite Group as well.

When it comes to practice, our team has two unique features.

 First, we break our girls into one of several different training groups rather than have everyone run together and do exactly the same workout. Our goal is to individualize training as much as possible and place runners in groups according to their ability. Newer, younger girls also tend to run much less than older, more experienced girls. Our approach is more incremental and emphasizes long run development of our girls so that they can not only improve throughout high school, but for our girls who choose to run in college, during their college years as well.

 Second, unless weather conditions are clearly unsafe, our team runs in every type of weather imaginable - including rain, snow, heat, and humidity. We ask our athletes to plan ahead on days where rain, cold, or heat are expected and believe very strongly that such an approach builds a sense of responsibility in our girls. Although we never cancel practice simply because it is raining or cold, we always defer to parental judgment when it comes to parents having concerns about their daughter practicing in certain types of weather. We strongly believe there are many positive general lessons to be learned about overcoming life's obstacles when it comes to running on a rainy day or under adverse conditions.

Competition. Given the varied performance goals for the girls on our team and goals for the team as a whole, we compete in a wide variety of races, ranging from 3000 to 5000 meters, such as:

- ***Less Competitive or Developmental Meets:*** we host our own set of Frosh-Soph and JV races for our less competitive and new runners to give those girls an opportunity to run against an appropriate level of competition. Many of the girls who enter our program begin with no running experience at all, and so these meets serve an important role in helping introduce those girls to our sport and the Cross Country experience overall.
- ***Competitive In-State Meets:*** our team competes in several meets that include most of the stronger teams in the state, like the Tiger Run in late August, Rumble in the Jungle in early September, the Valkyrie Invitational in mid-September, and Lexington Catholic Invitational in mid-October. Some of these meets are National and Regional class meets (i.e. some of the best teams in the country or southeastern United States will attend), and some are going to be a strong State level meet (i.e. top Kentucky teams will attend).
- ***Competitive Out-of-State Meets:*** as a team with national class aspirations, we believe that it's important for our team to run against the highest possible level of competition – a level of competition that is often found at out-of-state meets. We've competed in over a dozen different states since 2004 and always attend at least two out-of-state meets every season – e.g., we take 40-50 girls to Chicago to compete in the Palatine Invitational and typically take 20-21 girls to Cary, North Carolina to compete in the Great American Cross Country Festival. Every four years, the team also seeks to compete at a major event in California, and we've attended the Manhattan Invitational in New York on three different occasions.

There are several reasons why we go on out-of-state trips, but the main reason is that these events create an incentive for our girls to work hard, while providing a very positive return on all that hard work. Given that the girls on our team can really sacrifice a lot as they pursue their competitive goals, we believe it necessary to create as much benefit as possible. And while most teams travel with 7-14 athletes on trips like this, our philosophy is that we will always bring as many girls as are capable of competing on a level that's appropriate for that meet.

Parents Group. A number of parents coordinate team events through our Parents Group. Those events include things like providing meet support (e.g. bringing and setting up the team tent), bringing food and drinks for our athletes at meets and/or practices, and putting on after-meet picnics at some of our bigger races like the State Meet. Our Parents Group also helps with fundraising efforts and doing many other little but vital things that assist our coaches and athletes.

Social and Electronic Media. We post team announcements, an event calendar, meet entries, workouts, weekly meet summaries, all-time performance lists, school records and a lot of other info at our team website (<http://crosscountry.ahsdistance.org>). The team also utilizes an email distribution system quite extensively in order to keep parents and athletes up to date on every possible event. We also run a team twitter account (@AHS_Distance) and a team Facebook group (Assumption Distance).



Academics and Cross Country. We take pride in having a lot of girls who not only perform well in their sport, but who also achieve on a very high academic level. Our Varsity group alone has had a number of National Merit Scholars, several National Merit Commended Scholars, and girls with perfect ACT scores. We have had finalists for the Wendy's Heisman Award and typically have 1-3 Varsity level girls selected to participate in the Governor's Scholars Program each summer. Over the last 15 years, we've also had just over a dozen girls enroll in Medical School. Our athletes are some of the highest ranked students in their respective grades. For example, we had class valedictorians on our 2005 and 2006 teams and several of the top ranked girls in each graduating class are typically a Varsity Cross Country runner. The overall (cumulative) GPA for our Varsity team is at least 3.7-3.8 every year, and each season we have as many as 1/3 of our girls with a cumulative GPA of 4.0. Many Cross Country girls take advanced and AP classes, and our girls go on to enroll in many different strong academic schools like Centre College, Notre Dame, Yale, and Brown, receive prestigious academic awards like the UofL GEMS (Guaranteed Entrance to Medical School) scholarship, and get accepted into the Honors Programs of local universities like IU, UofL and UK.

Coaches. The team's coaching staff currently includes one head coach and several assistant coaches.

Barry Haworth (Head Coach) is an economics professor at the University of Louisville with over 40 years of experience in competitive High School, College, Open/post-Collegiate and Masters level Cross Country and Track. Coach Haworth coached briefly at the collegiate level (Cerritos College in Southern California) and extensively at the high school level (Warren HS, St John Bosco HS, Mayfair HS in Southern California, and at Assumption HS). He began coaching Track at Assumption in Spring, 1999, and Cross Country in Fall, 2000, and has been the head coach of these programs since 2008 and 2004 respectively. Coach Haworth is a USATF Level 1 certified coach, Brooks ID coach, KHSAA licensed official, regular presenter at the annual Kentucky Track and Cross Country Coaches Association (KTCCCA) Clinic, member of the KTCCCA Hall of Fame, and has served as the KTCCCA President. He has coached with several local running clubs over the years, including the Mason Dixon Athletic Club and Derby City Athletic Club, and currently coaches athletes with the Louisville Track Club during the off-season.

Joe Walker (Assistant Coach) began with the team in 2011 and is currently our Group B head coach. Coach Walker is an avid runner and outdoors-person. He has participated many different road races and running events like the Bourbon Chase, and actively hikes in many different parks across the State. Coach Walker came to our program with previous High School coaching experience at Atherton HS.